Fixing subjectivities

the politics of belonging and achieving the nation

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Fixing subjectivities:
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Abstract

This paper focuses on the dynamic between fixity and flow – how global flows undermine structures that provide a sense of belonging and continuity through time and how these structures are shored up. A reading of intersubjectivity and performativity is presented that accounts for why and how these structures are maintained. However, this process is not seen as quiet or uniform, but instead a function of power relations. This is illustrated by the application of the outlined theory to a current issue in Japan: the position of the national anthem (kimigayo) and national flag (hinomaru) flag in the performance of national belonging. This example illustrates the complex interaction between fixity and flow and highlights issues of power and violence in the daily process of achieving the nation.

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Introduction

Mobility and flow feature heavily in the globalisation literature. This paper, while not denying the importance of these concepts, makes an argument for the ontological need for maintaining a sense of continuity through time based on a phenomenological understanding of intersubjectivity. This paper proposes a framework for analysis that focuses on this process and that re-centres the subjective experience of belonging as the primary unit of analysis. As such it is suggested that too much focus on mobility overlooks fundamental questions about the work we do 'to be' in the world, and the power structures that arise through that work. On the reading presented, fixity as a concept cannot be dismissed as regressive or damned simply as anti-globalisation rhetoric. To do so ignores the ways in which certain modes of belonging are rendered fixed and the conflict, contradiction and struggle that comes from that process.

Here, this dynamic of flow and fixity is applied to the nation. It is illustrated by the application of the theory to a current issue in Japan: the position of the *kimigayo* (de facto national anthem) and *hinomaru* (de facto national flag) in the performance of national belonging. This example illustrates the complex interaction between fixity and flow within nations and highlights issues of power and violence in the daily process of achieving the nation.

The Nation as a Process

Nationalism literature has been likened to a 'conceptual labyrinth' (Dekker et. *al.* 2003: 345), made all the more beguiling by its multiple axis of analysis. First, there is the confusion, conflation and 'interutilization' (Connor, 1994: 92) of key terms such as 'nationalism', 'nation' and 'state'. Secondly, scholars also emphasise different aspects of nationalism: it can refer to 'ideas, to sentiments, and to actions' and scholars look for different aspects dependent on the type of nationalism they are investigating (Breuilly, 1993: 404). Scholars of nations and nationalism tend to fall into three camps: *primordialists*, who believe in the naturalness of nations as social groups; *modernists* who emphasise the link between modernity and the development of the nation; and *ethnosymbolists* who stress the importance of ethnic pasts and cultures in the development of nations. Even within these camps we find further divides: as Smith (2001: 47) writes, the dominant modernist approach to nations and nationalism focuses on socioeconomic factors (Hechter, 1975; Nairn, 1977); sociocultural factors (Gellner, 1983); political factors (Giddens, 1987; Breuilly, 1993; Mann, 1995); ideological factors (Kedourie, 1993); or constructionist factors (Anderson, 1991; Hobsbawm, 1992).

Rather than start with a clear cut definition, and in keeping with what has been termed 'the cognitive turn' in the study of nations and ethnicity (Brubaker et. al. 2004), this paper argues that the nation be seen as a continual process of achieving the national by those who populate it. By this it is meant that certain modes of social organisation, and the performances they entail, are categorised as being national by those who are doing them, and this process of doing national things reconstitutes the nation over time. However, while the need to belong to structures that provide a sense of continuity and therefore facilitate agency, is emphasised, this is not taken as a quiet process.

It is argued that both implicit performances, and explicit attempts to categorise acts as national, affect individuals in their daily lives and highlight the individual and the body as sites of negotiation and contestation of power. By looking at how nations are created by the work of those who populate them, and how this work is far from uniform, quiet or consensual, we are able to move away from positing nations and ethnicities as given facts in the world. We are sensitised to the differences and struggles within nations, and therefore can avoid making blanket assumptions about them. This is also a move away from solely state-centric views of nationalism as an elite concoction that cannot fully explain what gives the nation its intense emotional pull, other than through reference to a false consciousness. Instead, the social process approach adopted here recognises the importance of both elites and popular will. Ways of being categorised as national, ways of making sense of self and the world are always products of power relations. An example of this politics of categorisation will be presented near the end of this paper.

Globalisation – flow and fixity

The collection of interconnected processes known as globalisation looms large over any debate in contemporary politics and society, not least concerning the nation. Increased mobility of people, capital and ideas, facilitated by new technologies, has prompted some to suggest that the hegemony of the nation-state is coming to an end (Ohmae, 1995; Strange, 1996). Transnational networks of identification have replaced rootedness and belonging within the territories demarcated by national borders (Castells, 2000) and cultural flows and increased cross boarder movement unsettle traditional categories of identification. In the words of Iwabuchi *et al.* these flows have:

> …drastically transformed the landscape of hitherto clearly demarcated national/cultural imaginaries in the world by making people's contact with cultural others and other lifestyles more immediate and reciprocal and thus cultivating various modes of new transnational connections and imaginations (Iwabuchi *et. al.* 2004: 2)

With this cultural melange of variegated worldviews (Pietrese, 1994, 2004) traditional forms of identification are challenged on all sides. Effectively the pluralisation of identities means that the nation is losing its place as the pre-eminent unit of identification (Scholte, 2005: 255).

Metaphors include global liquidity (Bauman, 2000), smoothness and movement (Hardt and Negri, 2000) and global complexity (Urry, 2003). However, it is argued here that the concept of fixity still has analytical relevance for understanding social and political processes, if we focus on the methods by which fixity is achieved.

Liquid, smooth, complex. The antonyms – solid, rough, simple – do not seem to have the same theoretical salience in a globalizing world. But, while it is undoubtedly the case that increased flow is having a profound affect on modes of identification, as Eriksen (2003) observes, statements about fluidity are seemingly less relevant at the micro level of everyday experience. Instead of being like particles that spread out uniformly to fill a new space, we still tend to clump in the corners - overwhelmingly, people are born, grow up, work and die in nation-states, and often in local communities. True, these communities can no longer be taken for granted, but as Eriksen puts it: 'This does not mean that they cannot be identified, but that they need to be accounted for.' (ibid: 12). Liquidity is sticky, smoothness is interrupted by boundaries and barriers, complexity is wilfully ignored. Solid, rough, and simple regain their critical significance with their mobilisation as phenomenon to be explained. Instead of why, we ask how (Githens-Mazer, 2008): how are relationships rendered solid?; how are (notionally) smooth surfaces made rough?; how is the complex made simple?

In answering these questions Lien and Melhaus (2007) introduce the concept of 'structures of immobility', and draw upon the metaphor of the 'riverbed and river' (Tsing, 2002). The river is global flow, while the riverbed is a structure that guides the flow in a certain direction. On this view while the river may flow at great pace, the riverbed, which guides the flow, remains relatively static. At certain moments in time, the riverbed will seem fixed in place, although overtime it will of course bend and shape according to the fiction of the water as it passes by. The course will change, but it will do so as a relationship between the structure and the flow (Lien and Melhaus, 2007).

Mobility and immobility are relative – certain 'truths' (genealogies, science, ethnicities) take on the semblance of being fixed in place and serve as anchoring points, providing stable vantage points for what is then perceived as more mobile, uncertain and unstable (ibid.). However, this is not a claim of ever-enduring, never-changing structure; there is only ever a perception of fixity, structures are made to appear standing still by the rapid movement all around them. To extend the metaphor, how are the banks of the river reinforced so they are not eroded to let the turbulent flow wash everything away? 'Cultural stuff', 'knowledge' and 'truth claims' are all ways in which people make sense of the worlds they live in, and this sense-making work is a continual social process of becoming through interactions

with others who implicitly share the same way of 'framing and parsing' the world around them (Brubaker et al., 2004). The social production of shared frameworks is a normalising process whereby cultural stuff is fixed and rendered true at the expense of other ways of being, framing and understanding.

The nation is a continual shoring up process, or what Marilyn Ivy calls 'suturing' (1995). The following argues that performative work structures national belonging. This work can be seen as continual attempts to fix relationships between people and places through classification, categorisation and identification; how gestures, utterances, situations, events, states of affairs, actions, and sequences of actions get classified as national (Brubaker *et. al.*, 2004: 43 - 45).

Belonging and security

Belonging is posited as both apolitical and political (Nira Yuval-Davis 2006). First to belong is an a priori psychological need and observable reality whereby individuals constitute and place themselves within a certain structure of immobility through enacting them in daily life. Second, belonging can be considered political when the criteria for belonging (how they should be enacted) is made explicit through the essentialisation of identification as a normative *ought*. Although these two aspects are separated analytically, it will be argued that in practical terms they continuously interact and influence each other. Again, as Lien and Malhaus observe, both the need to belong and the politics of belonging 'condense and express fundamental values of belonging…they invariably evoke normative discourses, not only about the way things, people, places and relationships are, *but also about the way they ought to be*' (2007: xv, my italics).

As such, belonging should be understood as dynamic rather than fixed (Yuval-Davis, 2006: 199), and as an inherently social process it is dependent on both feelings of belonging and acceptance of belonging by the wider group. It is about feeling an emotional attachment to something coupled with reciprocal acknowledgement:

> Belonging is about emotional attachment, about feeling 'at home'…and about feeling 'safe'…Belonging tends to be naturalized, and becomes articulated and politicized only when it is threatened in some way (2006: 197)

This definition suggests that belonging is not something that is displayed overtly at all times; in fact it remains a largely tacit (although still observable) process. Instead, belonging comes to the fore 'only when it is threatened in some way' and that threat can be either real or perceived (the result being the same). To articulate and politicise is to make explicit those tacit assumptions and acts when it is no longer possible to take them for granted. Therefore it should be emphasised that belonging as a process is always going on.

One of the key words associated with belonging is security. Security can be taken to mean one of two things: security from physical harm or security from psychological distress. It is the psychological aspect of security that I wish to emphasise here, although the physical dimension should not be downplayed as a result. In order to answer the question of 'why belong?' or even 'what are we belonging to?' I will now draw upon a phenomenological reading of the constitution of everyday reality (Schutz, 1967a; 1967b) before introducing the concept of 'social representations' (Moscovici, 1984). It is argued in the following that we belong to a way of socially constructing the world through a mutually reinforcing process of using shared explanatory categories.

The phenomenological tradition began by Edmund Husserl (1970) holds that the constitution of our social reality is a phenomenon and as such needs to be described and explained. On this view the orderly, intelligible world is seen as the achievement of those who live within it. There may or may not be an objective world, but for all practical purposes an objective world is perceived, and filtered by the perceptions of those who experience it. Therefore the concept of intersubjectivity is key: the world is experienced from infinite subjectivities but this does not lead to a chaos where intersubjective reality breaks down, as evidenced by the relatively ordered, routinised and predictable nature of everyday life. Instead, we suspend our doubt for pragmatic reasons, and tend to assume that those around us are seeing and experiencing the same world as we are. This emphasis on the practical aspect of getting on with being in the world should be emphasised here. Knowledge about the world, and therefore the ability to negotiate it rests on shared assumptions of intersubjectively coherent experience.

Schutz (1967a; 1967b) suggests that in order to make sense of the never ending and infinitely variegated flow of information coming from the world around us we turn to typifications. The experiencing consciousness is therefore a typifying consciousness. Furthermore, our typified knowledge about the world is sedimented; it builds up over time to form a catalogue of related typifications. Our early, pre-language typified categories are learned from those close to us, such as our parents, but the vast majority of our categories are language carried. This means they are 'rapidly and overwhelmingly "socialized" through the development of increasingly complex communicational skills' (Heritage, 1984: 54). Every experience takes place within a framework of familiarity, which is 'furnished through a presently unquestioned (though, Schutz insists, always questionable) stock of knowledge at hand. Even the utterly novel and unfamiliar is grasped as such against this pre-established background of normality.' (ibid: 51) We assume that those around us have acquired the same typical categories and when we talk to them we assume they are drawing on

the same pool of knowledge. This practical way of being in the world is worked into the unconscious, something we do in our natural (non-reflexive) attitude.

Social representation theory also emphasises the socially negotiated nature of knowledge. Moscovici suggests representations occupy a central place in the way in which the physical and social world are categorised and experienced. Indeed:

> …the principle forms of our physical and social environment are fixed in representations…and we, ourselves, are fashioned in relation to them. I would, even, go as far to say that, the less we think about them, and the less we are aware of them, then the greater their influence becomes. This is so much the case that the collective mind transforms everything it touches (1984: 14)

This does not mean that things we are aware of do not have influence on us – recessions, tsunamis and terrorist plots all have direct and very real influence on those involved. Instead, social representations have influence over us because they provide the means for formulating positions vis-à-vis events; they stand between the event and our understanding of it, performing a framing and interpretive role. A firmly anchored social representation is influential because it is unconscious, pre-reflexive, and rendered commonsense. It thus sits beyond the realm of questioning.   As with Schutz's type categories, representations are socially held as they are mediated, talked about and reiterated on a daily basis by individuals, and through their constant re-presentation they build our sense of collective reality. For Moscovici the underlying purpose of representations is to make the *unfamiliar familiar* (ibid: 25). As has been suggested above regarding belonging, actors want to feel comfortable in the worlds they create and comfort requires stability, and the certainty that stocks of knowledge acquired over time will be useful in making sense of events as they happen. Therefore: '…the dynamic of relationships is a dynamic of familiarisation, where objects, individuals, and events are perceived and understood in relation to previous encounters or paradigms' (ibid: 24).

We need to place new objects, and future expectations of what will happen when we interact with them, within the context of our accrued knowledge. Not to do so would leave us impotent and dithering, past experience would be useless, the future unintelligible and anxiety unmanageable. This is vividly illustrated by Oliver Sacks (1985) in his description of a patient suffering from visual agnosia, a condition that renders the subject unable to identify common objects, who mistook the shape of his wife's head for a hat and promptly tried to wear 'it'. In order to get on in the world we need what Anthony Giddens (1991) terms *ontological security*, which he defines as: 'an

autonomy of bodily control within predictable routines' (1985: 50 in Cassel, 1993: 14). Because, as Tannen (1993: 14 -15) puts it: 'they only way we can make sense of the world is to see the connections between things, and between present things and things we have experienced before or heard about.'

Performance, embodiment and fixing subjectivities

The routinised nature of daily life is key to understanding how structures of immobility are sustained through time. As social representations are drawn upon in social situations and interactions, they are validated through their use and become expected. Actors place much importance on trust and expectation in their day-to-day lives, for instance knowing how to act in social situations which necessitates a shared but unprovable framework of reality (Giddens, 1991: 36). As this framework is not written, it can only be reproduced through continual use. Acts both mean and constitute meaning, so the body is not just a material fact but also a bearer of meaning: it is the social aspect of that performance which renders "social laws explicit" (Butler, 1988: 521 - 526). With social laws in place, the expectation is for performances to be done properly, and if they are done so positively, reassuring proto-emotions such as happiness, security and familiarity follow (Keemanovic, 2005). When performances miss the mark the effects are obvious, direct, and emotional (Butler, 1988: 528).

Although the concepts of performativity and embodiment have been associated with gender studies, they have also been applied to ethnicity and group belonging; for example, Fortier's study details how the ethnic Italian community in London, through repetition of stylised acts, cultivates a sense of belonging that sediments into the body (1999: 48) – a recursive and continual processes of fixing belonging through doing: '[rituals] are lived as expressions of a deeply held sense of identity and belonging' and as such that belonging is about marking out 'terrains of commonality that delineate the politics and social dynamics of "fitting in"' (ibid: 42). So, although the need to belong has been argued a *priori*, actually achieving belonging should not be taken as a simple fact. As Vikki Bell puts it: '…one does not simply or ontologically belong to the world or to any group within it. Belonging is an achievement at several levels of abstraction' (Bell, 1999: 3). Belonging necessitates a set of socially held signs that can be displayed (performed) to others and signal to them that an individual belongs.

So, to take belonging as an achievement means to recognise that any group identity needs to be maintained through performative work, and that performances are public, reciprocal and can fail. Viewing belonging as having a performative aspect, then, is to understand that identities of belonging are constructed by the expressions that

are said to be their results (Fortier, 1999: 43). Therefore it is not enough to focus on how we *think* our national identity, but also how we *do* it. By acknowledging the unconscious aspect of performing belonging we can see the body as a site of doing and reinforcing the national, both through positive emotional rewards and punitive social punishment.

Furthermore, this observation of constructedness should not be taken as a sign that this process can be rationally deconstructed in the pragmatic world of day-to-day existence. In the above examples it has been stressed that there are social methods of reward, through reassurance, and punishment, through anxiety, that regulate and maintain performances. Once, as Bell puts it, performance produces the effect of an identity (Bell, 1999: 3) and performance and identity are tied together (anchored in Moscovician terms), the momentum of social expectation becomes difficult to resist. While theoretically transparent, as a practical mode of being in the world the embodied identity is not so easy to shed.

So far this process of accruing type categories or social representations has neglected a fundamental question: how certain 'language carried categories' become the dominant means of making social sense of the world and how their dominance is challenged. In more traditional societies the chances for alternative modes of social representation to emerge are smaller. Under conditions of increased globalisation what is 'language carried' is not limited to the domestic education system, media or state rhetoric, and more and more competing ideas come into the realm of social representation. As Lewis writes: 'The sign is no longer inscribed within the fixed cultural order. The meaning of things seems less predictable and less certain' (1994: 25 in Howarth, 2006: 71).

As Howarth suggests: 'social representation is not a quiet thing', it is instead a babble of dispute and controversy over the fixing of what constitutes intersubjective social 'facts' (2006: 80). With globalisation the babble can only get louder and it is perhaps in this that the relationship between the global flow and local fixity can be placed. To make sense of babble it is first imperative to tune into one sound and try and ignore everything else. That which is irrelevant must be bracketed and put to one side. The louder the din, the louder a sound has to be to be picked up. And the assault of difference inherent to globalising processes produces more and more background noise.

The following is an example of attempts to politically fix and make explicit both the meaning of national belonging in Japan and the performance expected to mark that belonging, and how these attempts to quieten the noise of discordant subjectivities have produced tensions at the level of the body and been met by resistance. It is argued that this fixing work is in direct response to global

flows. What follows is an example of the dilemma inherent in the construction of navigable social worlds, illustrating the importance of fixity and flow in the study of globalising processes.

National symbols in Japan

Flow

The 1990s (or the 'lost decade' as it has become to be known) marked the beginning of a recession in Japan that would see the end of the unrivalled growth of the post-war period. The bubble had burst, but not just economically: with the sudden downturn came a raft of social problems that began to eat away at Japan's confidence. Masochistic autopsies became a national pastime - as Yoda (2006: 16) writes: 'A huge volume of commentaries on the malaise afflicting Japan… has fed into and shaped the impression of overall national doom.' According to Kaneko Masaru:

> …there are three problems: language does not capture people's feelings; obvious goals are not apparent; and there are no channels to express opinions. Under these circumstances even imagination, anger, and other human emotions are collapsing (Masaru and Masaomi, 2003)

Furthermore, Japan like much of the industrialised world is experiencing a demographic crisis. In 1970 the elderly (those over 65 years old) accounted for 7.1 percent of overall population but by 1994 the figure had doubled to 14.1 percent and by 2006 the elderly constituted 26.6 million, or 20.8 percent of the total population. In comparison, official statistics show that the 0 – 14 years old demographic group has been steadily shrinking since 1982, while the working age population (15 – 64 years old) has also continued to decline, hovering at 83.73 million by 2006.   In terms of their proportion of the total population, the elderly have surpassed the younger age group since 1997 (Statistical Handbook of Japan, 2007). And the future does not look to offer a solution: the Health, Labour and Welfare Ministry has predicted that nineteen out of 47 prefectures will experience at least a 20% drop in population by 2035 (Japan Times, 2007), and by 2055 it has been estimated that Japan may experience as much as a 30% population decrease to around 90 million (Japan Times, December 2006). Due to a rapidly aging population and low fertility rate, fundamental questions are being asked about how Japan will survive as a nation.

These bleak statistics have been met by calls from some for Japan to remodel itself as an immigrant nation. Hidenori Sakanaka, a former head of the Tokyo Regional Immigration Bureau, has called for 10 million new immigrants by the middle of this century in order to "survive as a nation" (Johnston, 2008). Sakanaka's book, *Immigration Battle Diary* (Nyukan senki, 2005) has a generally outward looking message: that Japan needs to take positive steps towards a multi-

ethnic society. Papademetriou and Hamilton (2000: 1) echo this concern, writing that relaxing immigration laws is now an economic imperative if Japan is to stay out of the 'second tier of politically – and economically – influential powers'.

However, other statistics suggest that the Japanese are much more worried about the economy than moral or cultural decline (Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 2001), with a more recent poll showing 49.3% (N=10233) of those questioned feeling the current recession directly (DIMSDRIVE Net Research, 2008). Nevertheless, recent nationalist tracts such as Fujiwara Masahiko's *Dignity of Nations* (2005) have suggested there is a real *national* crisis in Japan, and that this crisis is linked to the flow of ideas and people that characterises globalisation. According to his argument, Japan has lost its way and needs to reach into its past to find itself (ibid: 95), placing its fate in the hands of a ruling elite governed by the spirit of *bushido* (Japanese code of conduct) (ibid: 83). As Kamakura Takao (2008: 30) has recently pointed out, the rhetoric of Fujiwara is very similar to conservative revisionists in the government. It is as a strategy of governance in the face of social change that the case of schools is presented.

Schools are sites of cultural reproduction (or reproduction of power relations), as children are socialised into the greater society they will eventually enter as working adults. This socialisation process, however, should not be viewed as simply learning how to get on in society. Discourses embedded within education socialise in a certain way, helping construct subjective orientations towards the state and to each other. Ways of being transmitted in schools are presented as something essential and somehow external to practice; in fact they are presented as the prerequisites for practice. They frame action by creating the 'effect of an unphysical realm of order that stands apart from the world of practice' (Mitchell, 1990: 572). This is a form of governmentality, what Foucault terms defining 'the conduct of conduct', or attempts to shape and guide the conduct of others (Rose, 1999: 3). McVeigh (1998: 125) has argued that the Japanese state has utilised the education system to forward a nationalist-economic agenda, noting how classroom 'truths' such as consensus, harmony and cultural homogeneity are dressed up in the clothes of tradition; as something inherent to being Japanese and therefore external to the physical realm. He notes that school functions take a special place in this socialisation process. School functions are ritualised; they 'reflect a concern for establishing a highly predictable rhythm of rites that clearly demarcates spatiotemporal boundaries, assigns everybody a role, and provides a general sense of order' (ibid: 133). It is no surprise then, that Tokyo Governor Shintaro Ishihara argued that reverence for the flag and anthem was needed in response to the growing 'chaos' he saw in schools (Repeta, 2006).

Fixity

The *kimigayo* (Emperor's Reign), Japan's *de facto* national anthem is believed to be one of the oldest in the world, dating from the 9th century. With the restoration of the Meiji emperor in 1868 and Japan's entrance into the international arena, the anthem, along with the *hinomaru* (literally the circle sun) national flag were instated as formal symbols of the nation. Up until 16th August 1945 the Japanese flag was displayed on every national holiday, and on these days every house was required to display the flag (Befu, 1992: 32); the *kimigayo* would be played before Kamikaze pilots went off to war. After the fall of Japan to American forces, the occupation government outlawed the display of the *hinomaru* and singing of the *kimigayo* as they were deemed symbols of Japan's militaristic national fascism. The imagery had penetrated all facets of life – for example children's alphabet cards issued during the war used the phrase 'Advancing Japan, radiant globe' (*Susumu Nippon, kagayaku chikyuu*) as an example sentence for the hiragana character su (す) (Dower, 1999: 171). As of December 1945 American authorities ordered the disestablishment of state Shinto and the separation of church and state. Display of the *hinomaru* was severely restricted and the singing the *kimigayo* was prohibited. Indeed, a man who improperly displayed the national flag in Yokohama in 1948 was sentenced to six months hard labour (Ibid: 208). When the occupation ended in 1952 the symbols were slowly reintroduced, but where never formalised, holding an entirely ambiguous position as wartime symbols of a nation that had, with the introduction of the 'Peace Clause', renounced the right to wage war.

The political status of the *kimigayo* and *hinomaru* was again thrust into the public sphere when in 1999 a high school principle in Hiroshima, caught in a dispute over the use of these national symbols at a graduation ceremony, committed suicide. This incident served as catalyst for Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) action, which immediately took steps to push through legislation that would formalise the place of both the anthem and the flag (Itoh, 2001). It was hoped that clear legislation would solve the dilemma at hand, and eradicate the circumstances that contributed to such personal turmoil. However, the progress of events since then has been far from straightforward. It has been characterised by vagueness, indirect threats, and more uncertainty, and has revived debate surrounding control, obedience, dissent and the drift right in modern Japan.

Despite Prime Minster Keizo Obuchi's promise not to punish those who refused to acknowledge national symbols, as well as the no enforcement mechanism within the *hinomaru* and *kimigayo* legislation, hundreds of protesting teachers have been reprimanded (Hirano, 2007). At some schools, teachers who do not stand and sing the national anthem risk losing their jobs. In October 2003 the Tokyo metropolitan board of education issued a directive that required teachers at hundreds of state schools to stand and sing the *kimigayo* with eyes fixed on the *hinomaru* flag (McCurry, 2004). In some cases, open protest has been met forcefully: Katsuhisa Fujita, a retired schoolteacher, was indicted for disrupting a graduation ceremony at his former school after he urged around 300 parents to remain seated during the national anthem (Japan Times, 2005).

There is also evidence that even those who are not falling foul of officials are still suffering. Psychiatrist Masaaki Noda has observed that teachers, caught between the dictates of boards education and their own personal convictions, are experiencing psychological and physical anguish. He notes that music teachers, who have to accompany the national anthem at school assemblies and other events, show particular stress, even "feeling their bodies were controlled by others" (Noda quoted in Hirano, 2007 and Tanaka, 2004), and under an umbrella claim of psychological suffering, 288 teachers filed a lawsuit against the Tokyo Metropolitan Government (McNeill, 2004).

With the teachers union *Nikkyoso* refusing to support them, the prospects of a favourable outcome did not look good, and a ruling in 2005 declared the directive constitutional as it did not force the teachers and school personnel to adhere to a specific belief. However, in 2006 the teachers, their number swollen to 400 including school personnel, won their case in the same district court and were awarded the nominal sum of 30, 000 yen for their distress over the order. The judge in the case ruled that the teachers have "no obligation to sing Kimigayo while facing the flag… to force anyone to do so would violate their freedom of thought and conscience" and the directive was nullified (Hongo, 2006).

This being the case, *The Yomiuri Shimbun* (2008) reported that in 2008 20 teachers from 18 different schools had been suspended for refusing to stand for the flag and anthem, 15 people fewer than the year before. Rebellion against the official stance on the status of these national symbols is, however, taking altogether more novel approaches. One such instance is subversion of the national anthem through use of the official second language: English (McCurry, 2006). In order to protest under the radar, a new set of lyrics – composed in cleverly chosen English that when sung is very difficult to distinguish from the Japanese original - is making its way around the internet. The new lyrics replace the Japanese with phonetically similar English, turning it into a benign love song called 'Kiss Me'.

On December 15th 2006 a revised version of the Fundamental Law of Education was introduced that deleted Article 1 of the previous clause, which referred to 'respecting the value of the individual', and added numerous references to the public realm (Minonru, 2007). Minoru goes further: '[The Abe administration's] highest goals are not freedom and equality, but discipline, order, authority embodied in the rituals of flag and anthem, and unquestioning service to the sate and corporation' (ibid.). Previously guarded from state intervention, Miyake Shoko has noted that this new legislation, through subtle changes in language, has made the direction of education, and the student – teacher relationship, open to government pressure. The stated goal is to instil 'a patriotic attitude towards our country.' The result:

> ...the new law enables the educational authorities to be completely in control without having to heed criticism from teachers, parents, or civic movements... Education has been made under the scrutiny and counsel of the citizenry; new laws make it the mouthpiece of government authority. (2006)

Conclusion

This paper has examined the notion of fixity as a useful analytical tool. It has argued that by re-introducing and problematising the phenomenon of intersubjectivity, and asking questions about how social continuity through time is achieved, the over-privileging of flow is avoided and the relationship between the two reinforced. It was also suggested that by viewing the nation as a continuous process of achieving the national, and focusing on the hows of this process, various pitfalls concerning definitions and the reification of groups can be avoided. The phenomenological perspective presented here suggests fixity and structure as continuing components of a globalising world.

The second part of this paper has presented a case study which illustrates the process by which flow produces fixity, how this fixity actually makes it harder to belong by removing the loop holes and ambiguities and making dilemmas in the way the nation is performed more explicit, as well as the political processes through which this fixity is contested in public. The example highlights the contestable nature of national symbols and how rendering tacit national categories explicit closes down a social space for different interpretations of the nation and as such produces conflict and difference.

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